

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATION
BILL, 2010
House Report 111-180

Legacy Road and Trail Remediation.--The Committee recommendation merges the budget requests for both the legacy road and trail remediation program and the new Administration initiative, protecting national forests. The new protecting national forests initiative has not been clearly explained by the Forest Service, but it shares the same goals and purpose as the proven legacy road and trail remediation program, which is to reduce deferred maintenance and protect watersheds and habitats by repairing infrastructure. The Committee recommendation provides \$100,000,000 for the legacy road and trail remediation program. This includes the \$50,000,000 requested for the program and the additional \$50,000,000 requested for the protecting national forests initiative. Thus the legacy road and trail program recommended funding level is \$50,000,000 above the fiscal year 2009 enacted level and \$50,000,000 above the budget request. The recommendation does not provide separate funding for the new protecting national forests initiative, but the Committee recommendation accomplishes the same goals of that initiative.

The Committee notes that the legacy road and trail remediation program protects American rivers, streams, endangered fish, and community water systems by repairing the environmental damage caused by the vast legacy road system developed by the Forest Service, which served the needs of the Forest Service over the years. The Forest Service has responsibility for 6,400 bridges, 378,000 miles of roads and thousands of miles of unofficial roadways. The Forest Service has not met its stewardship responsibilities to care for these roads, which would prevent harm to the downstream water needs of the States and communities and the aquatic life our Nation cherishes. The Service's own statistics indicate that there is a \$3,530,000,000 backlog in deferred maintenance for roads and bridges and another \$280,000,000 deferred maintenance backlog for trails. In addition, there are thousands of stream crossings that are barriers to the movement of Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed fish, making it difficult for these species to fully interact with habitats, including the relatively pristine, upper watersheds which are often the prime strongholds for listed fish species. Several large, regional watershed restoration efforts are spending hundreds of millions, even billions, of dollars on downstream management and regulatory requirements. However, restoration that leads to recovery as defined by the ESA cannot occur absent the Forest Service meeting its obligations in upstream areas. The Forest Service should use this funding in a strategic effort to decommission and fix roads and trails in environmentally sensitive areas. It should focus on those areas where Forest Service roads may be contributing to water quality problems in streams and water bodies which support threatened, endangered or sensitive species. The Service should utilize public input to help select projects, report back to the Committee within 120 days of enactment on the selected projects, and display its selection process and implementation activities on the agency's web site.